

Harpers Ferry

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Maryland / Virginia / West Virginia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Here at Harpers Ferry, where the Potomac River cuts through the Blue Ridge, you encounter the past and its stories in magnificent expanses and hidden quarters. In the force of these rushing waters George Washington envisioned military strength and chose Harpers Ferry as the site for a US Army. Factories from the early 1800s witnessed innovations that fueled the Industrial Revolution. Here abolitionist John Brown struck a blow against slavery, and soon the Civil War trapped the town between North and South. In the wake of war's devastation, legendary Civil Rights leaders met at Storer College and claimed "every single right that belongs to a freeborn American."

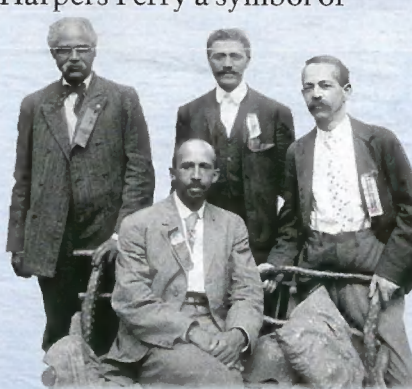
From **The Point**, where the two rivers meet, you can see the V-shaped water gap. People on the move found their way through this natural corridor—first American Indians, then European frontier folk. Robert Harper started a ferry across the Potomac here in 1747. By the early 1800s the rivers powered the armory complex and commercial mills. The revolutionary method of manufacturing with interchangeable parts was perfected at the Halls Island rifle factory. See **Industry Museum**, **US Army site**, and **Virginius and Halls islands**.

In October 1859, determined to arm enslaved people and spark rebellion, John Brown and his followers seized the armory and several other strategic points. The raid failed, with most men killed or captured. Brown's trial and execution focused attention on the issue of slavery and propelled the nation toward civil war. **John Brown's Fort** stands near its original location; nearby is the **John Brown Museum**.



US troops at **Bolivar Heights**, **Schoolhouse Ridge**, and the **Murphy-Chambers Farm**.

John Brown's raid made Harpers Ferry a symbol of freedom. Visit **Black Voices** and **John Brown Museum**. After the war Baptist missionaries founded **Storer College** to educate students of any race, male or female. Meet alumni like **Don Redman** and **Coralie**



Franklin Cook in the **Storer College** exhibit and explore the former **Storer College Campus**. Harpers Ferry also attracted national Civil Rights leaders and organizations. Visit the **Niagara Movement** exhibit and the **Murphy-Chambers Farm**.

Stroll on a level riverside path; climb to a hilltop vista point; join up with the long-distance **Appalachian Trail**, **C&O Canal towpath**, or **Potomac Heritage Trail**. A climb to **Jefferson Rock**, **Loudoun Heights**, or **Maryland Heights** will reward you with vistas of the town and its dramatic natural setting.



Top: View toward Lower Town and Potomac River gap, Harper House (town's oldest building) at left. Left to right: Armory grounds, late 1820s; John Brown, 1859; New York State militiaman on Camp Hill, 1862; W.E.B. Du Bois, seated, with Niagara Movement leaders at

Storer College, 1906; pioneering jazz musician Don Redman, the "little giant of jazz," at his 1920 Storer College graduation.

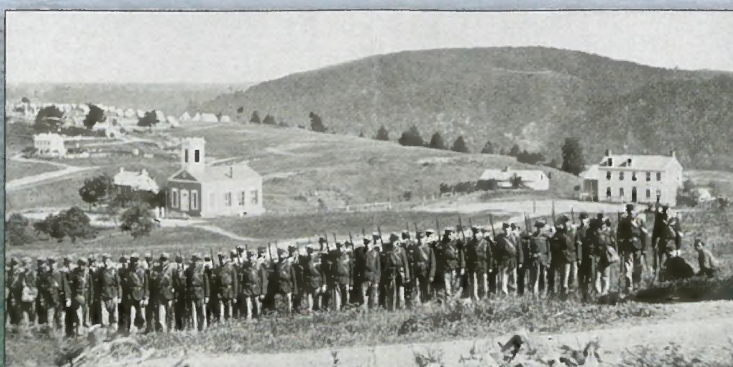
FROM TOP: HARPERS FERRY, NPS; MARK MUSE; 1820S SCENE: MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY; BROWN AND SOLDIER: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; DU BOIS ET AL: UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS; MURPHY-CHAMBERS FARM: HARK D. CLARK; BELOW FROM LEFT: FERRY AND RUDD: NPS; UNION TROOPS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES; CAMP AND NIAGARA: NPS.



Potomac ferry crossing and US Arsenal, ca. 1803.



Flood damage on Shenandoah Street, 1889.



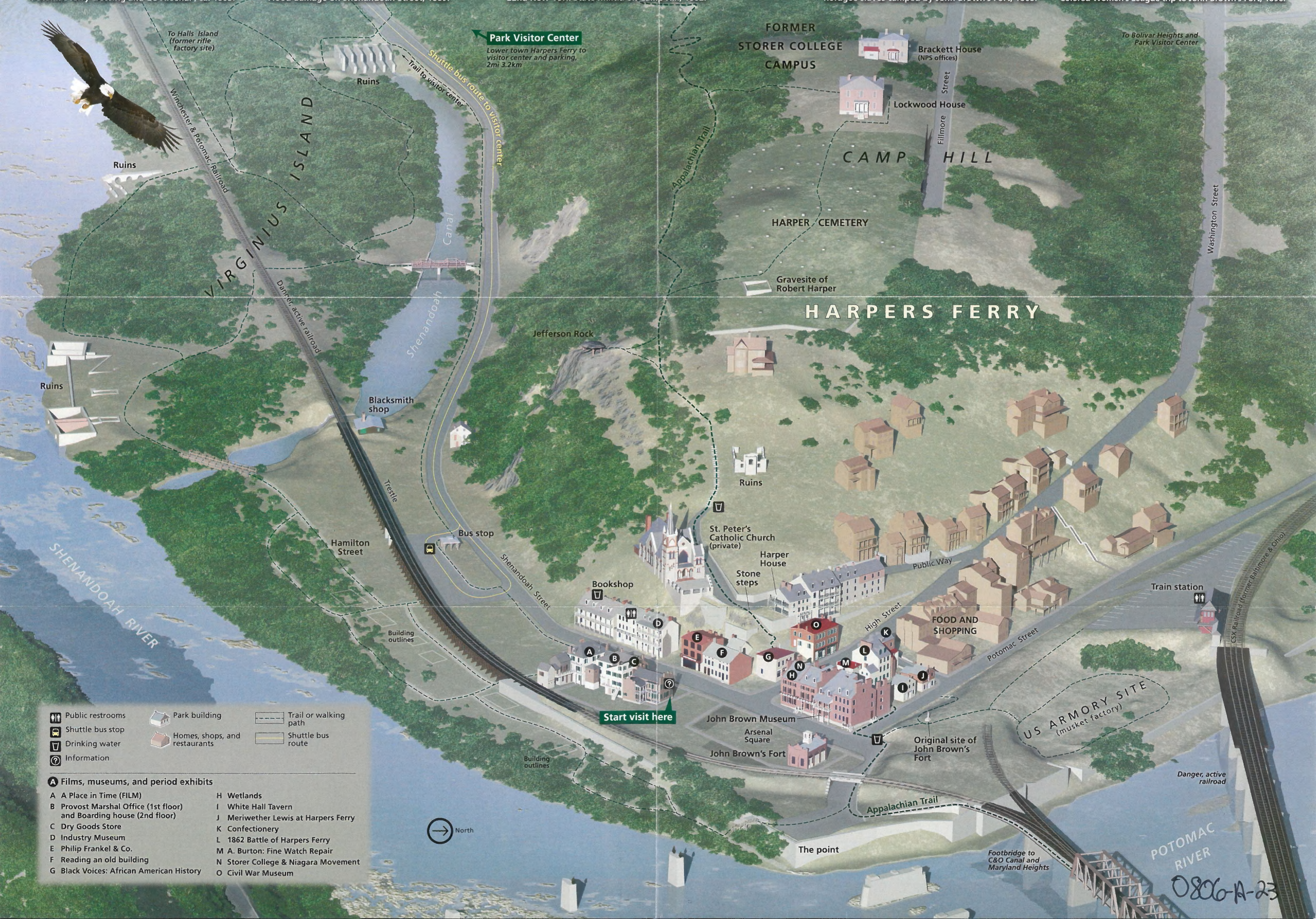
22nd New York State Militia on Camp Hill, 1862.



Refugee slaves camped by John Brown's Fort, 1865.



Colored Women's League trip to John Brown's Fort, 1896.



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